

Praying for a Miracle: Perspectives Gleaned from a “Forgotten” Ruling in Hilkhhot Chanuka

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The Rama (OC 187:4, 682:1) rules that one who forgot to recite Al haNissim (on Chanuka or Purim) in the second brakha of Birkat haMazon may do so within the Harachaman petitions which are appended to the *bentching*. In such an instance, one begins by reciting the following:

May the Merciful One perform miracles for us as He performed for our forefathers in those days in this time.

הרחמן הוא יעשה לנו נסים כמו שעשה
לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

This is followed by the lengthy paragraph “Bimei Matityahu” in the case of Chanuka, and by “Bimei Mordechai v’Esther” in the case of Purim.

The Rama’s ruling, which grants license to request that Hashem “perform miracles for us,” is the subject of a fascinating discussion regarding the halakhic propriety of praying for miracles.

It is axiomatic to Judaism that Hashem is omnipotent and can freely alter the course of nature. It is also assumed that prayer can help bring about a desired outcome which defies the most overwhelming odds.¹ Yet, Chazal emphasize repeatedly not to rely on miracles (*ein somchin al hanes*). According to many authorities, it is improper to pray for a miraculous occurrence, and doing so constitutes a *tefilat shav* – a prayer in vain.

The precise contours of these competing motifs are not readily apparent. Questions that require elucidation include the following:

- What is the source and rationale not to pray for a miracle?
- Is praying for a miracle merely discouraged or is it actually forbidden?
- What criteria define a particular outcome as “miraculous,” and hence, unworthy of prayer, as opposed to one that is part of *teva* (the natural world) for which prayer is appropriate?
- Does a separate standard exist for different categories of people? Might it be permitted for individuals of extraordinary spiritual stature to pray for a miracle while ordinary people may not?
- Are there specific instances in which praying for a miracle is encouraged?

A full treatment of this topic would entail delving into a range of complex theological issues that lie beyond the scope of this essay. Rather, we will narrow our focus to surveying some of the basic sources and providing a framework for understanding their implications.

¹ See, for example, Rabbeinu Bachyei to Devarim 11:13.

Crying Retroactively: The Case of *Tefilat Shav*

The Mishna in *Berakhot* (9:3) offers two examples that are deemed *tefilat shav* (a vain prayer):

*One who prays retroactively, [his prayer] is a prayer in vain.
How so? If one's wife is pregnant and he said "May it be His will that my wife give birth to a boy," that is a prayer in vain.
If one is entering town and hears the sound of screaming coming from the town and he says "May it be His will that [those screams] are not from my family," that is a prayer in vain.*

הצועק לשעבר הרי זו תפלת שוא
כיצד היתה אשתו מעוברת ואמר יהי
רצון שתלד אשתי זכר הרי זו תפלת
שוא. היה בא בדרך ושמע קול צווחה
בעיר ואמר יהי רצון שלא יהיו אלו
בני ביתי הרי זו תפלת שוא.

Common to both examples - praying for the gender of a fetus (whose gender has already been determined) and praying that a tragic event which has already transpired did not occur in one's own home – is the Mishna's introductory heading of "one who cries retroactively." This suggests that the inappropriateness of prayer in both instances is that the petition, rather than being "future oriented," is focused on what has already occurred. Inasmuch as prayer involves asking for Heavenly mercy, it can only be deemed relevant when directed to effecting a future outcome rather than changing the past.

Commenting on the first case, the Gemara (*Berakhot* 60a) challenges the premise of the Mishna that prayer has no efficacy once the gender has been determined:

Does prayer not work? Rav Yosef asked: [the verse states] "And afterwards, [Leah] gave birth to a girl and she called her Dinah." What is meant by "afterwards"? Rav said, after Leah judged herself and said: there are going to be twelve tribes coming from Yaakov. Six came from me and four came from the maidservants - that makes ten. If [my fetus] is a boy, my sister [Rachel] won't have as many [come from her] as the maidservants! Immediately [the fetus] changed to a girl, as it states "and she called her Dinah." [This is not a proof that one can pray to change the gender of a fetus because] we do not mention miraculous occurrences. Alternatively, the episode involving Leah took place within forty days [of conception].

ולא מהני רחמי? מתיב רב יוסף:
ואחר ילדה בת ותקרא את שמה
דינה, מאי ואחר? אמר רב: לאחר
שדנה לאה דין בעצמה ואמרה:
שנים עשר שבטים עתידין לצאת
מיעקב, ששה יצאו ממני, וארבעה
מן השפחות - הרי עשרה, אם זה
זכר - לא תהא אחותי רחל כאחת
השפחות! מיד נהפכה לבת, שנאמר
ותקרא את שמה דינה! - אין
מזכירין מעשה נסים. ואיבעית
אימא: מעשה דלאה - בתוך
ארבעים יום הוה.

The Talmud cites a midrashic legend concerning the Matriarch, Leah, who, after becoming pregnant with a male fetus, prayed that she give birth to a daughter (thus ensuring that her sister Rachel not have a lesser share of the twelve tribes than any one of the maidservants).

Immediately, the fetus in Leah's womb was transformed into a female.

This episode implies that prayer has relevance even when it involves a plea to alter the gender of an already formed fetus. Why, then, did the Mishna state that praying for one's pregnant wife to give birth to a boy is considered a *tefilat shav*?

The Gemara offers two answers. According to the second answer, Leah's prayer was offered within 40 days of conception when the fetus' gender is still undetermined. In such an instance, praying for a specific gender would not constitute a *tefilat shav*. The Mishna, by contrast, deals

with one who utters such a prayer after 40 days from conception. Since by that time the gender has already been determined, the prayer is deemed a retroactive cry and is, hence, a *tefilat shav*.²

However, in its initial response, the Gemara implies that Leah's prayer may have actually taken place after the initial 40 days of conception. Although her prayer proved successful in arousing Divine mercy to alter the gender of the fetus, the Mishna classifies such a prayer as *tefilat shav* because "*ein mazkirin maaeh nissim*" – we do not mention miraculous occurrences.

Praying For Supernatural Intervention: Inappropriate or Impermissible?

It emerges from the Talmudic discussion that once the forces of nature deem a given situation fixed and irreversible, praying to alter that reality via supernatural Divine intervention constitutes a *tefilat shav*.³ Thus, while Hashem may, in fact, choose to alter the genetic makeup of a developing fetus in exceptional circumstances, praying for such an outcome is not an optimum expression of prayer. This case, along with several others, are codified in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 230)*.⁴

Likewise, the *Sha'agat Aryeh*⁵ asserts that prayer should be limited to instances where a desired outcome is perceived as being within the realm of possibility according to accepted laws of nature, and not for results that require supernatural intervention.

The formal designation of *tefilat shav* implies that offering such prayers is deemed superfluous and futile. However, doing so may also entail an actual prohibition. The *Or haChaim*, in his commentary *Chefetz Hashem (on Masekhet Berakhot)*, deduces from the Gemara's phraseology of "*ein mazkirin maaseh nisim*" – "we do not mention miraculous occurrences" – that praying for a miracle constitutes a violation.⁶

A striking formulation of such a prohibition is cited by R. Akiva Eiger (in his glosses to *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 230:1*) in the name of *Sefer Chasidim (#795)*:

One should not pray for anything that is not a natural occurrence, even though the Holy One Blessed Be He, is fully

אל יתפלל אדם לבקש דבר שאינו כפי הטבע ואף שהיכולת ביד הקדוש ברוך הוא ... ואסור להתפלל שיעשה

² Interestingly, the *Midrash Tanchuma (Parshat Vayeitzei, #8)* maintains that a prayer regarding the gender of the fetus may be legitimately offered up to, and including, the moment that the prospective mother is seated on the birth stool (so long as the fetus has not yet emerged). For further discussion of these seemingly contradictory views, see the comments of R. Eliyahu Mizrahi and *Nachalat Yaakov* to Rashi Bereishit 30:21.

³ See *Shenot Eliyahu* to the Mishna in *Berakhot* who defines *tefilat shav* in terms of whether the desired outcome is deemed as being consistent with the natural order ("*teva*") as opposed to miraculous ("*al derekh nes*").

⁴ Among the cases cited there (*seif #2*) is that of someone measuring the grain in his granary. Prior to measuring, he recites a prayer that Hashem should send His blessing to the grain pile, but afterwards, such a prayer is deemed *tefilat shav*, since "blessing is only found in what is hidden from the eye." The commentaries struggle to find a distinction between praying that Hashem send blessing into the grain pile and praying that one's wife deliver a male child. Seemingly, the contents of the grain pile are already fixed and pre-determined in no less a manner than the gender of the fetus. See R. Asher Luntzer's *Ma'adanei Asher, Berakhot # 142* for a discussion of this question.

⁵ *Gevurot Ari to Taanit 19a*.

⁶ An even more explicit formulation appears in the Talmud Yerushalmi to *Taanit (3:2)*: "*Ein matri'in al ma'ase nissim*" – "we do not cry out for miraculous developments."

capable [of providing it] ... It is forbidden to pray that the Holy One Blessed Be He perform a supernatural miracle, such as [praying] that a tree should bear fruit before its proper time.

לו הקדוש ברוך הוא נס בשינוי עולם
כגון שיוציא אילן זה פירות קודם
זמנו.

This view is echoed by various commentaries and halakhic authorities.⁷

Rationales for Prohibiting *Tefilat Shav*

The prohibition against praying for a miracle requires explanation. If, as noted, it is undeniably within Hashem's ability to perform a miracle, why should it be forbidden to pray for one?

Moreover, how was Leah justified in praying that the fetus in her womb be changed from male to female?

Divine Reluctance to Override the Laws of Nature

There are several halakhic and hashkafic considerations that may explain why one should not pray for miracles. First, although Hashem can readily perform miracles at will, His preference is to run the world via the laws of nature which He has established, without resorting to miraculous intervention. This is especially true when dealing with the fate of individuals, as evidenced in the following Gemara (*Shabbat* 53b):

Our rabbis taught: There was an incident involving a woman who died and left a son who required nursing, and the husband did not have the means to hire a wet nurse. A miracle occurred and his breasts provided milk like a woman and he nursed his son. Rav Yosef said: Come and see how great this man was that he was the recipient of such a great miracle. Abaye said to him: Just the opposite! How terrible it was for this person that the natural order was altered for him!

תנו רבנן: מעשה באחד שמתה אשתו
והניחה בן לינק, ולא היה לו שכר
מניקה ליתן, ונעשה לו נס ונפתחו לו
דדין כשני דדי אשה והניק את בנו.
אמר רב יוסף: בא וראה כמה גדול
אדם זה, שנעשה לו נס כזה! אמר לו
אביי: אדרבה, כמה גרוע אדם זה
שנשתנו לו סדרי בראשית!

While Rav Yosef extolled the merit of the man who miraculously became capable of nursing his newborn baby, Abaye viewed this same phenomenon in a negative light, given that this miracle necessitated Hashem's altering the natural course of creation. The Divine "reluctance" to resort to miracles which upset a semblance of the natural order is a motif that is emphasized frequently by Rambam,⁸ Ramban⁹ and other Rishonim.¹⁰

In short, one should not pray for a miracle out of deference to the Divine Will which, in the ordinary course of events, eschews miracles.

⁷ See *Bekhor Shor* to *Shabbat* 21, as well as *Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim* Vol. 2 # 111. See, however, *Divrei Dovid* (Bereishit 30:21) who distinguishes between praying that "one's wife give birth to a male" (which is a physical impossibility in the event that the fetus is already female) and praying that "the fetus should be transformed into a male" which is permissible, despite the fact that such a transformation contravenes the laws of nature. Based on this, he reconciles the seeming contradiction between the Talmud and the *Midrash Tanchuma* (see above, note 2).

⁸ See *Moreh Nevukhim* 3:32; *Peirush haMishnayot to Avot* 5:6, *Igeret Teshuvot haMeitim*.

⁹ See commentary to Bereishit 6:19; Vayikra 21:17; Bemidbar 1:45, 13:1; Devarim 20:8.

¹⁰ See *Derashot haRan* (Mechon Shalem edition, 5737), *Derush* #3, p. 46, and *Derush* #8, p. 129; *Sefer haChinukh* #132.

Ein Somchin al Hanes: Not Relying on Miracles

A further rationale not to pray for a miracle is the Talmudic principle “*ein somchin al hanes*” – “we do not rely on miracles.”¹¹ Based on this notion, it is forbidden to place oneself in harm’s way in the expectation that one will be spared negative consequences:

A person should never put himself in a dangerous situation saying that they will perform a miracle for him, perhaps they will not perform a miracle for him, and [even] if they do perform a miracle for him, they will deduct from his merits.

Shabbat 30a, Taanit 20b

לעולם אל יעמוד אדם במקום סכנה
לומר שעושין לו נס שמא אין עושין
לו נס. ואם עושין לו נס מנכין לו
מזכיותיו.
שבת דף ל., תענית דף כ:

The Talmudic phraseology implies that relying on miracles is a dual problem. First, it is presumptuous to enter a situation with the naïve expectation that a miracle will be performed on one’s behalf. This motif is implicit in the Talmud’s initial statement: “saying that they will perform a miracle for him, perhaps they will not perform a miracle for him.” The next phrase highlights an additional concern: “And if they do perform a miracle for him, they will deduct from his merits.” In effect, one should take pains not to benefit from a miracle performed on one’s behalf because it depletes one’s reservoir of merits which would otherwise remain available for the afterlife.¹²

According to some Rishonim,¹³ placing oneself in harm’s way with reliance on a miracle poses a violation of “*Lo tenasu et Hashem*” – “You shall not test G-d.”¹⁴ Apparently, any conscious gesture that challenges Hashem to intervene unnaturally constitutes a violation of “You shall not test Hashem.”

Each of these considerations is consistent with the objection to prayer for miraculous intervention. Doing so is presumptuous, in that one deems himself worthy of miraculous intervention. Moreover, it leaves one vulnerable to losing a share in the afterlife. Finally, praying actively for a miracle may be construed as testing Hashem, since it beckons Him to intervene in an extraordinary manner.

Defining “Natural” versus “Supernatural”

Admittedly, the issue that remains elusive is the fine line between “natural” and “miraculous.” Should the standards for defining a particular outcome as natural or supernatural be relegated to

¹¹ This rule appears in various permutations in the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi. For various efforts to harmonize the sources, see the entry in *Encyclopedia Talmudit* Volume 1 “*Ein somchin al hanes*.”

¹² This rationale is the basis for the congregational response to one who recites *Birkat haGomel*: “He who bestowed good on you should bestow upon you all good forever.” As explained by the commentaries (see *Barukh She’amar*), this response represents the hope that benefiting from Hashem’s extra measure of kindness should not come at the expense of one’s share in the afterlife.

¹³ Radak to Berishit 12:12 and to Shmuel Aleph 16:2; *Kuzari Maamar* 5 #20, *Chovat haLevavot*, *Shaar haBitachon* Chapter 4.

¹⁴ Devarim 6:16. The linkage between *ein somchin al hanes* and the above verse finds support in the Yerushalmi, *Yoma* 1:4. By contrast, the Bavli (*Taanis* 9a) cites *lo tenasu* in connection to performing a mitzvah with an expectation of receiving an earthly reward, would apparently not regard placing oneself in harm’s way as a violation of *lo tenasu*.

statistics? If so, what percentage represents the cutoff between “*teva*” and “*nes*”? Alternatively, should the definitions of “*nes*” and “*teva*” be determined by whether or not the “miracle” can be explained rationally, however statistically slim the possibility? Finally, might the halakhic parameters of natural and supernatural, or even the very prohibition to pray for a miracle, differ from person to person? Would a more spiritually elevated individual be justified in petitioning for miraculous treatment?

In order to gain a better perspective on some of the above, let us revisit the Talmudic discussion regarding Leah’s prayer, as well as the Rama’s ruling in *Hilkhot Chanuka*.

Exceptions for Exceptional Individuals

As noted, one of the paradigmatic illustrations of *tefilat shav* is a prayer to alter the fetus’ gender once it has already been formed. We have also seen that many commentaries infer from the Talmudic discussion regarding Leah that offering a prayer in such an instance is halakhically problematic. If so, the question begs itself: how was Leah permitted to pray for a miracle?

The unequivocal answer given by many commentaries¹⁵ is that Leah’s unique spiritual level entitled her to pray for a miracle.¹⁶ In effect, Leah represented the exception that proved the rule.

In a similar vein, we find that the rule of “*ein somchin al hanes*” (we do not rely on miracles) is waived with respect to certain outstanding personalities. For example, the Talmud relates that R. Chanina ben Dosa placed his foot at the entrance of a viper hole and declared confidently: “It is not the scorpion that kills, but the sin that kills.” Furthermore, numerous legends are recorded regarding R. Chanina ben Dosa’s frequent reliance on miracles. Rashba¹⁷ and *Sefer haChinukh*¹⁸ explain that extraordinary individuals of such caliber stand above the laws of nature and need not be concerned about subjecting themselves to the normal risks and hazards that the average person needs to avoid.

From these exceptional examples we may conclude that Hashem’s preference to preserve the laws of nature only applies to ordinary people but not to people of extraordinary character for whom Hashem is happy to “bend” His will to accommodate their will. This is consistent with the notion expressed in the verse in Iyov (22:28): “*Vatigzar omer vayakam lakh*” – “you will decree and it will come to pass.”¹⁹

We may add that such exemplary individuals, because of their supreme level of trust in Hashem, do not experience distinction between the natural and the unnatural and do not regard deviations from the norm as miraculous. All occurrences are simply seen as manifestations of the

¹⁵ *Gevurat Ari* (Ta’anit 19a); *Chefetz Hashem* to *Berakhot* 60a; *Bekhor Shor* to *Shabbat* 21a; Rama miPanu in *Alfasi Zuta* to *Berakhot* *ibid*; *Igrot Moshe* OC Vol. 2 #111.

¹⁶ Rama miPanu notes: “Let alone the Patriarchs and Matriarchs since for them the order of creation was no barrier.” R. Moshe Feinstein (*Igrot Moshe*, *ibid*) adds that Leah’s dispensation may also have been warranted based on the calculation that she made (that without changing the gender her sister Rachel would have less children than even the maid servants).

¹⁷ *Responsa* Vol. 1 #413.

¹⁸ *Mitzva* # 546.

¹⁹ See *Sefer Ha’Ikarrim*, *Maamar* #4, *Perek* 41; Rama miPanu *ibid*.

retzon Hashem, the Divine Will.²⁰ Hence, the objection to relying on miracles and praying for supernatural intervention is suspended for them.

Miracles Performed for a Community

In the wake of the Rama's ruling that one who forgot to mention *Al haNissim* in *Birkat Hamazon* should insert a separate *Harachaman* prayer beginning with "May the Merciful One perform miracles for us ...," halakhic authorities over the ages have advanced additional considerations regarding when it may be appropriate, even for ordinary individuals, to pray for a miracle.

Bekhor Shor (*Shabbat* 21, cited in *Shaarei Teshuva* to *Orach Chaim* 187:3) suggests a halakhic distinction between praying for a miracle for oneself and praying on behalf of the community. Only the former instance is to be avoided while the latter case is permitted. Hence, the *Harachaman* prayer which asks that Hashem perform wonders for "us" – namely, the community – poses no halakhic problem.

This distinction would correspond well with the rationale suggested above that praying for a miracle is inherently presumptuous, and therefore forbidden. It is understandable that an individual ought to view himself as underserving of a miracle on the basis of his individual merits. By contrast, the collective merit of the community may provide sufficient grounds to justify requesting a miracle on their behalf. Similarly, if the concern is based on depleting merits, this, too, should only apply to miracles performed for an individual and not to miracles performed for the community whose merits are constantly being replenished.²¹

Nature-Based Miracles

Bekhor Shor offers a second defense of the Rama's ruling by differentiating between miracles that have no basis in the natural world (i.e. transforming the gender of the fetus) and miracles that are cloaked within the forces of nature. The type of miracle to which the *Harachman* prayer refers is one that is patterned after the military victory over the Greeks which we celebrate on Chanuka. Although this victory was achieved against overwhelming odds, it was manifest in the form of military prowess and could be justified by the laws of nature. Since such victories have been sustained historically, prayer for such a triumph can be viewed as falling within the natural order.

This distinction would apparently assume that praying for a miracle is prohibited out of deference to the Divine Will which is loath to perform overt miracles. Consequently, to the extent that a given "miracle" can be camouflaged within the forces of nature, the concern is mitigated.²²

²⁰ For further elaboration, see *Mikhtav Me'Eliyahu*, Vol. 1, pp. 177-186, 197; *Lev Eliyahu* (R. Eliyahu Lopian), *Bereishit*, pp. 64-68.

²¹ On the other hand, if the reason that one should not pray for a miracle is because of Hashem's reluctance to alter the natural order, there is less of a basis to distinguish between the individual and the community. Furthermore, if relying on a miracle borders on the Torah prohibition of "Do not test Hashem," then perhaps even praying for a communal miracle should be avoided.

²² However, if the reason that one should not pray for a miracle is because doing so is presumptuous, or because it may deplete one's spiritual merits, or because it tests Hashem, then the basis for this distinction is not as firm.

Enhancing Hashem's Glory in the World

Another explanation for Rama's ruling, offered by *Yeshuot Yaakov*,²³ is that if one prays for a miracle in the hope that the miracle can be a vehicle to enhance the honor of Hashem in the world, then it is permissible.

This explanation implies that the prohibition is based on a concern that being the beneficiary of a miracle detracts from one's merits. This problem is obviated when the miracle serves to inspire others about the wonders of Hashem since in such an instance, the depletion of one's merits due to the miracle is counteracted by the merit accrued through having been the vehicle for Kiddush Hashem in the world.²⁴ It is such a motivation that may underlie the Harachaman prayer codified by the Rama.

Praying for Unspecified Miracles

R. Moshe Shternbakh (*Moadim U'Zemanim* Vol. 2 #148) suggests that the halakhic problem of praying for a miracle only exists when praying for a specific miracle tailored to a given circumstance, whereas in the case of one who omitted Al haNissim, one merely asks Hashem to perform miracles in the abstract without any specificity.

The basis for this distinction may perhaps best be understood if the halakhic problem of praying for miracles lies in its conveying a sense of presumptuousness or its bordering on testing Hashem. The less specific and focused the prayer, the lesser degree to which the petition carries such associations.²⁵

A Matter of Timing: Capitalizing on *Eit Ratzon*; Tapping in to an "Open Faucet"

Bnei Yisaskhar (Shabbat 8:22) suggests that one may pray for miracles during an "*eit ratzon*" (time of favor). The implicit message of this approach is that there are times that are designated for special Divine grace when Hashem is more eager to perform miracles. At times like these, we are encouraged to utilize the power of prayer to invoke Divine mercy via natural or supernatural means, and all of the considerations enumerated above do not apply.

In line with the approach suggested by the *Bnei Yisaskhar*, we may suggest further that since Chanuka (and Purim) are days during which Hashem has already performed miracles on behalf of His people, it is therefore most appropriate at the anniversary of those miracles (*bayamim ha'heim bazman hazeh*) to pray that Hashem continue to perform miracles for us today as well. Consider

²³ *Orach Chaim* 682.

²⁴ For elaboration on this idea, see *Yeshuot Yaakov* to *Parshat Noach*. Incidentally, this reasoning may also explain the basis for offering a *Korban Todah*, as well as *Birkat haGomel*, which are performed when being rescued from harm. By utilizing the experience to inspire others about Hashem's wondrous ways, the recipient of the Divine grace ensures that his experiencing the good fortune brings about a "net gain" in his spiritual bank account.

²⁵ On the other hand, if the issue is framed in light of Hashem's preference to preserve the natural order or because a miracle may deplete one's merits – it is difficult to see the basis for distinguishing between a focused prayer and an unfocused prayer.

the image of a spigot that has already been opened to allow water to flow. Whereas a closed faucet does not readily open anew, an open spigot stands ready to gush. Days of miracles are analogous to an open spigot; hence, praying for a miracle does not require Hashem to open a “new channel” to defy the natural order. Additionally, such a request is not deemed presumptuous or a form of testing Hashem since the spigot is “already open.” By the same token, miracles performed during a season of miracles would most likely not deplete one’s spiritual merits.

A Request for Miracles within Al haNissim

In closing, it is noteworthy that many Rishonim cite a version of Al haNissim that concludes with a prayer that “just as You performed miracles for our forefathers then so shall You do so for us today.” The *Mechaber* (682:3) cites two views regarding whether this concluding wish should be recited. As noted by the *Mishna Brura* (ibid), the main objection is either that requests should not be inserted within the latter three blessings of the Amida or because a forward looking request is incompatible with the focus of Al haNissim which reflects thanks for the past.²⁶ Interestingly, the Rishonim do not raise the objection of praying for a miracle. Apparently, the various approaches outlined above can serve as an equal justification for concluding Al haNissim with a request that Hashem perform miracles for us.

May we be granted the faith and humility to witness the dedication of the third Beit haMikdash speedily in our days in a manner that Hashem deems most appropriate.

²⁶ In this regard, it is noteworthy that adding a request for the future alongside thanks for the past is not entirely uncommon. For example, the *Nishmat* prayer, after enumerating the many ways in which Hashem has rescued us in the past, proceeds with a request that Hashem not abandon us forever. Similarly, the Hallel includes the verses “*Ana Hashem hoshi’a na*” and “*Ana Hashem hatzlicha na*” – Please Hashem save us, please Hashem have us succeed.” Apparently, it is entirely appropriate that one’s expression of thanks be accompanied by a plea that the pattern of good fortune continue in the future. I have elaborated on this idea in [two shiurim posted on yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org) (entitled “Hoda’ah as Thanks and Confession,” and “Between Thanksgiving and Chanuka: The Nature of Hoda’ah”).